

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council



STAFF

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Executive Sponsor: Jacob Castillo, Chief Sustainability Officer

SUBJECT

Resolution 2024-131 Approving an Intergovernmental Agreement Between the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County to Expand NOCOBiz Connect Across Larimer County.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is to approve an Intergovernmental Agreement (the “Agreement”) that allows the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County to collaboratively offer a sustainable business program.

The City funded the development of a new sustainable business program in the 2023-2024 budget cycle. Funding was used to establish a free, voluntary, and regional sustainable business program called NOCOBiz Connect (NBC). From 2009-2019 ClimateWise filled this role. However, in 2021-2022 an in-depth engagement process led to the reimagining, redevelopment and modernization of ClimateWise.

NBC is open to every business in Fort Collins. It educates businesses about sustainable business practices, provides personalized resource navigation services and recognizes businesses for their sustainability efforts. The program is administered through local contractor, Monarca Group. NBC was designed from the start to establish a regional presence, and the Agreement formalizes its first regional funding and operational partnership.

The Agreement will create a City-County partnership, allowing Larimer County access to the NBC administrative platform. This will let businesses outside of Fort Collins but within Larimer County join the growing NBC network. NBC will be a single, consistent presence in our region for businesses interested in sustainable business programing.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adoption of the Resolution.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

Most businesses do not operate in isolation within Fort Collins. Many have regional customers, suppliers, and partners, and their reputation, reach, and impact can be broad reaching. Likewise, many business incentives and resources are available regionally. By aligning NBC across Fort Collins and Larimer County, this Agreement offers the following key benefits:

- **Regional Integration for Businesses:** Businesses in Fort Collins and specific cities in Larimer County can participate in a single sustainability program that provides consistent support, standards, and opportunities. This can make it easier for businesses to learn, collaborate, adopt sustainable practices, and get recognized for their efforts.
- **Collaboration for Economic Mobility and Environmental Impact:** The City and County’s collaborative approach significantly amplifies the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives by reaching a larger group of businesses. This regional collaboration empowers us to align economic resilience with environmental and climate action goals, providing a pathway for businesses to reduce operational costs through sustainability measures such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, and resource conservation.
- **Equitable Access to Sustainability Resources:** By forming this City-County partnership, NBC increases the number of businesses that can access sustainability resources. This includes minority-owned, women-owned, rural, and immigrant-owned businesses that might not otherwise have the capacity or funding to participate in sustainable business practices. Special attention will be given to ensure program outreach includes historically underrepresented businesses, while remaining free and open to every business interested.
- **Alignment with State-Level Initiatives:** NBC is the local administrator for the State of Colorado’s Green Business Network (CGBN), our statewide sustainable business program. This Agreement broadens the City’s alignment with CGBN across our region. When businesses participate locally in the statewide program, they amplify their recognition and impact. They get access to resources, recognition, and support services, while contributing to local and state sustainability goals. This partnership increases visibility and credibility for businesses both locally and statewide.
- **Simplified Access and Administration:** By integrating Larimer County as an official program partner, businesses in Fort Collins and other parts of the County will benefit from a single, cohesive experience. The platform provides a bilingual one-stop-shop for business owners looking for resources, tools, and guidance on sustainable business practices. Additionally, it simplifies administration for the City and County, because resources, reporting, and outreach efforts are tracked in one place.
- **Scalability for Future Growth:** The Agreement formalizes a collaborative partnership between the City and County. Less formal partnerships also exist between NBC and the Multicultural Business Entrepreneur Center, the Small Business Development Center, and other local organizations. These organizations provide important services in our community. By establishing a framework that creates space for support systems to align and formalize, we position ourselves to understand gaps and overlaps, and consider opportunities to best leverage valuable community resources.

Through this agreement the County will have access to NBC’s program website (nocobizconnect.com), several data trackers, templates, branding, materials, physical collateral, and operational systems and processes. These assets will enable the County to quickly and affordably deploy business sustainability support beyond Fort Collins. Furthermore, expanding NBC services into the County increases collaboration across local and regional business support resources. NBC serves all businesses while keeping equity at the center of its outreach approach. In other words, NBC has structures in place that allow it to personalize services, meet business where they are on their business journey, and focus on what is most meaningful to them.

CITY FINANCIAL IMPACTS

For the rights granted by the City to the County contained herein for the 2024 calendar year, the County will pay the City 10% of its Sustainable Small Business Program budget item for the 2024 budget year, but not less than \$4,000, and not more than \$15,000 by December 1, 2024.

For calendar years 2025 through 2028, the County will pay the City 10% of its Sustainable Small Business Program budget item for each of the budget years, not more than \$15,000, but not less than \$4,000 per year. The County shall make payment to the City by February 1 of the applicable year.

BOARD / COMMISSION / COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

None

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Public outreach was not conducted specifically related to establishing this Agreement. However, the decision to design NBC as a regional presence and to pursue a City-County partnership and align local and regional support agencies was the result of extensive community engagement through the “Reimagine ClimateWise” process. Reimagine ClimateWise was an 18-month process in 2021-2022 managed by local non-profit Sustainable Living Association that considered what sustainable business programming in our region should look like moving forward. Dozens of businesses and community members participated in the process.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution for Consideration
2. Exhibit A to Resolution